

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY NICOSIA IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY LONDON

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PGOV, CY, US

SUBJECT: REDUCTION OF SENTENCES IN DAVIES CASE

FOLLOWING IS EXTRACT FROM TRANSCRIPT OF DEPARTMENT NOON
PRESS BRIEFING MARCH 21:

BEGIN TEXT: A I HAVE ONE THING THAT I WANTED TO VOLUNTEER
TO YOU -- THIS IS UNDER THE NEW "VOLUNTEER RULE" -- AND
THAT IS A REACTION TO THE DECISION OF THE SUPREME COURT OF
CYPRUS TO REDUCE SENTENCES OF THE TWO PERSONS CONVICTED IN
THE DEATH OF AMBASSADOR DAVIES IN 1974. LET ME JUST READ IT
TO YOU.

THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE HAS LEARNED WITH GREAT DISMAY OF THE
DECISION OF THE SUPREME COURT OF CYPRUS ON MARCH 17, TO RE-
DUCE SUBSTANTIALLY THE PRISON SENTENCES HANDED DOWN LAST
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SUMMER TO TWO CYPRIOTS IMPLICATED IN THE KILLING OF AMBASSA-
DOR RODGER DAVIES AND A CYPRIOT EMPLOYEE OF OUR NICOSIA
EMBASSY IN AUGUST, 1974.

ACCORDING TO OUR UNDERSTANDING THESE TWO MEN WILL BE SET
FREE NEXT AUGUST AFTER HAVING SERVED ONLY 18 MONTHS OF THEIR
ORIGINAL 7 AND 5 YEAR SENTENCES.

THIS RESULT CLEARLY DOES NOT SERVE THE INTERESTS OF ALL NATIONS CONCERNED IN COMBATting TERRORISM WHERE-EVER AND WHENEVER IT OCCURS.

Q JOHN, ARE YOU FINISHED?

A YES.

Q DO YOU KNOW WHERE -- FIRST, ON WHOSE REQUEST THIS SUPREME COURT ACTED THIS TIME? HAVE YOU MADE THIS VIEW KNOWN TO THE NICOSIA GOVERNMENT? AND HAVE YOU BEEN ABLE TO FIND OUT WHETHER THIS ACTION IS POLITICALLY MOTIVATED?

A WELL THE ANSWER TO THE FIRST QUESTION IS: NO, I DON'T KNOW WHO ASKED FOR THIS ACTION BY THE COURT.

YES, WE HAVE COMMUNICATED THIS OFFICIALLY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF CYPRUS.

Q DOES YOUR PAPER THERE SHOW -- BECAUSE I DON'T RECALL -- WHAT THEIR ORIGINAL CONVICTION WAS ON?

IT WAS NOT ON MURDER CHARGES, I BELIEVE.

A. IT WASN'T. NO, MURREY.
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Q DO YOU HAVE THEIR NAMES?

A I DON'T HAVE THEIR NAMES. ALL OF THAT, OF COURSE, IS OF RECORD AND WE CAN LOOK THAT UP FOR YOU IF YOU WANT.

Q AND THE THIRD QUESTION?

A AND THE THIRD QUESTION, WHETHER OR NOT THIS WAS POLITICALLY MOTIVATED, IS SOMETHING THAT I WOULDN'T PRESUME TO SPEAK TO HERE.

Q JUST A POLITICAL DECISION?

A I JUST DON'T KNOW. I AM NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO ANSWER THAT.

Q HAS THE UNITED STATES MADE A FORMAL PROTEST TO THE GOVERNMENT OF CYPRUS?

A WE HAVE EXPRESSED OUR FEELINGS -- WHAT I HAVE JUST SAID -- TO THEM; HERE AND AT NICOSIA, AT A HIGH LEVEL. BUT I

AM UNABLE TO DESCRIBE FOR YOU THE RESPONSE.

Q DO YOU KNOW, JOHN, BY ANY CHANCE, IF -- FOR SOMEONE WHO IS SENTENCED TO 5 OR 7 YEARS THIS IS FAIRLY ROUTINE -- A PAROLE, OR THE EQUIVALENT OF PAROLE AFTER 18 MONTHS?

A I DON'T. NO, I DON'T.

WE ARE SIMPLY SAYING THAT WE FELT THE CRIME WAS SEVERE AND SERIOUS AND TRAGIC AND WE DON'T THINK THE SENTENCE, AS IT WILL BE SERVED, IS COMMENSURATE WITH THAT.

Q IN MAKING THIS PLAIN, YOU APPEAR TO BE -- I MAKE THE ASSUMPTION THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF CYPRUS IN SOME WAY EN-UNCLASSIFIED

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COURAGED THE COURT TO REDUCE THE SENTENCE -- BECAUSE OTHERWISE, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT YOU WERE INTERFERING IN THE JUDICIAL PROCESS RATHER THAN A QUESTION OF POLICY.

A I DON'T THINK WE ARE INTERFERING IN THE SENSE --

Q I WITHDRAW THE WORD "INTERFERE" AND SUBSTITUTE "COMMENTED ON."

A A DECISION HAS BEEN MADE AND WE ARE SIMPLY COMMENTING.

Q. YOU ARE NOT IN THE HABIT OF COMMENTING ON WHAT COURTS DO IN DEMOCRATIC COUNTRIES.

A NO. IN THIS CASE IT WAS THE MURDER OF AN AMBASSADOR AND IT WAS AN ACT OF TERRORISM, AND WE FEEL STRONGLY ON BOTH COUNTS.

Q WOULD IT BE POSSIBLE TO GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT WHAT THE ATTITUDE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF CYPRUS WAS PRIOR TO THIS COURT ACTION?

A WELL I DON'T KNOW THAT I CAN GET FOR YOU WHAT THE ATTITUDE OF ANOTHER GOVERNMENT --

Q IN OTHER WORDS, WAS THE SUPREME COURT URGED THAT THE SENTENCES BE REDUCED?

A I WILL TRY, OZZIE. I DON'T KNOW THAT WE ARE IN A POSITION TO SPEAK FOR WHAT OTHER GOVERNMENTS' ATTITUDES WERE.

Q WHAT REASON DID THE COURT GIVE FOR REDUCING THE SENTENCES?

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A I DON'T KNOW. I AM NOT SURE.

I READ THE STORY AS IT WAS REPORTED IN THE PAPER, AND I DON'T RECALL THAT ANY REASON WAS GIVEN. BUT I DON'T, IN FACT, KNOW.

IF THEY GAVE A REASON -- IF THEY DID -- I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT WAS.

Q JOHN,CAN YOU CLARIFY THIS -- I DON'T RECALL WHAT THE RECORD SHOWS -- AT THE TIME THESE TWO MEN WERE ARRESTED AND SENTENCED, DID THE UNITED STATES SAY ANYTHING THAT INDICATED THAT IT REGARDED THESE AS THE TWO MEN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MURDER?

A I DON'T THINK THAT WE DID. AS I RECALL, WE DID NOT.

I WASN'T HERE, BUT I DON'T RECALL IN READING THE HISTORY OF THIS, THAT WE MADE ANY -- SAID ANYTHING ABOUT WHO WE THOUGHT WERE THE GUILTY ONES.

Q EXCUSE ME.

IN CONNECTION WITH YOUR OFTEN REPEATED CONCERN FOR TERRORISM, HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THE POSITION OF THE AMERICAN AUTHORITIES WHO AS TAKEN TWO WELL PROVEN TERRORISTS WHO HIJACKED SOVIET PLANE -- (KILLING STEWARDESS.)

AND NOW IN THE UNITED STATES SAFELY AND WELL.

A WE HAVE BEEN THROUGH THAT JUST RECENTLY AND IN QUITE SOME DETAIL, AND I WOULD BE HAPPY TO SHOW YOU EXACTLY WHAT WAS SAID.

Q NOT DETAILED.

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A EXCUSE ME?

Q THERE WAS NO DETAIL. EVERYBODY JUMPING FROM OTHER PEOPLE.

YOU REFER US TO IMMIGRATION AUTHORITY. IMMIGRATION AUTHO-

RITY REFER US TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT.

A NO, I THINK THAT WE HAVE SAID EVERYTHING THAT WE CAN SAY
TO YOU ON THE SUBJECT OF THAT, AND JUST WHERE THAT CASE IS.

Q CAN YOU NOT COMMENT?

DOES THAT MEAN THAT YOUR CONCERN FOR TERRORISM DOESN'T APPLY
TO SOVIET TERRORISTS?

A NO, NO, IT DOES NOT MEAN THAT. WE CONSIDER TERRORISM A
SERIOUS, NONPOLITICAL CRIME.

Q FOR KILLING STEWARDESS -- FROM HIJACKING PLANE NOT SER-
IOUS -- A NONPOLITICAL CRIME?

A I AM NOT SURE THAT I AM GOING TO BE ABLE TO TELL YOU ANY-
THING MORE THAN WE HAVE SAID ABOUT THIS.

IF YOU WANT TO LOOK AT WHAT WE HAVE SAID, IT IS ALL IN THE
RECORD, AND OF FAIRLY RECENT DATE.

Q THANK YOU, JOHN. VANCE

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